

Queen Charlton village set to be free from “rat running” forever

Preventing “rat-running” through Queen Charlton village was included in a raft of flagship “Liveable Neighbourhood Schemes” proposed at the B&NES Council cabinet meeting on 23rd June 2021. The Queen Charlton scheme addressed problems arising from through traffic in this small village which has no pavements and one street light on the main road. Problems such as speeding, and lack of pedestrian safety. Project design and public consultation in 2022 were undertaken ahead of a 6-month experimental traffic regulation order. The scheme was monitored “live” and reviewed ahead of a decision expected soon about making the scheme permanent.

The single road through Queen Charlton village is not closed. To be clear - the approach road from Charlton Road is open to all vehicles and the section from Queen Charlton through to Whitchurch is open too— but open to pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-riders but not to motor vehicles. 78% of respondents to a public consultation on this ETRO while “live” expressed SUPPORT including comments about the area feeling safer especially for children and the elderly and that it was more pleasant for walking and cycling.

“Having been a runner and now active walker I have used Queen Charlton Lane for over 40 years, and it has become more dangerous for pedestrians due to excessive speed. Since the road closure it is a joy to walk without the fear of speeding cars. I walk the lane every day and hope the trial becomes permanent.”

“It has made an immediately noticeable difference by eliminating through traffic. I commute by cycle, and it now feels much safer, no longer used by cars travelling up to 60mph as a short cut from the main road.”

What has been the effect on the wider area? A study shows that *“the through-traffic restriction trial has significantly reduced traffic along Queen Charlton Lane and encouraged an uplift in active travel along this route, including walking and cycling. While the data shows that traffic on the principal alternative routes to Queen Charlton Lane has increased this is to be expected as the purpose of trial was to encourage commuter traffic to stay on the main roads. While the increase is not insignificant, it is felt that a considerable proportion of that change may be reflecting a general increase in traffic. It is therefore difficult to draw a definitive conclusion on the impact of the trial itself on these alternative routes. On balance, it appears that the volume of displaced traffic is relatively modest.”*

Speech to scrutiny panel January 11th 2024

I would add that any increase in volumes on alternative roads is well within the capacities of those roads and junctions.

A Queen Charlton resident said to me *“This scheme has transformed our lives.”*

Whilst this LN scheme is different to urban schemes, I hope that this positive experience can reassure residents in other areas that their local LN scheme can also have profound benefits which become clearer over time.

I urge that the Queen Charlton ETRO be made permanent.

END

Cllr Duncan Hounsell
January 2024